

Altoona Car Shops, Fire Engine House No. 8
201 Chestnut Avenue
Altoona
Blair County
Pennsylvania

HAER No. PA-230-A

HAER
PA,
7-ALTO,
2-A-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

HAER
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7-ALTO,
2-A-

ALTOONA CAR SHOPS, FIRE ENGINE HOUSE NO. 8

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Location: 201 Chestnut Avenue, Altoona, Blair County, Pennsylvania
USGS Quad: Altoona, Pennsylvania (1:24000)
UTM: 17 E.720900 N.4489030

Date of Construction: 1871

Builder: Pennsylvania Railroad
W. Hasell Wilson, engineer

Present Owner: Home Nursing Agency

Present Use: Maintenance garage/automotive

Significance: Built in 1871, the Fire Engine House No. 8 displays architectural details which are consistent with the early construction period of the Pennsylvania Railroad's Altoona Works.

Project Information: This project was undertaken in 1987 by HAER in conjunction with America's Industrial Heritage Project as part of an architectural survey covering a nine-county region in Southwestern Pennsylvania. Randall Cooley, Director. See HAER No. PA-108, Pennsylvania Railroad, Altoona Works, Altoona, Blair County, Pennsylvania for further project information and documentation.

Compiler: Peter Stott, Historian
Gray Fitzsimons, Editor

History:

In his annual report of February 1871, the railroad's Chief Engineer of Construction noted that the stable and fire engine house (33' x 53' in plan) would be among the four buildings which would be completed in the month of February. Eight years later, James Dredge described the single-story, brick engine house as "containing besides the steamer, hose, fire-escapes, buckets, axes, and all the paraphernalia of a fire station. A regularly organized fire brigade is established among the workmen, who are always ready to respond to any alarm of fire..."

Charles Clark's *Altoona Illustrated* (1896) includes an early photograph of the building with a high five-story, hose-drying tower at the east end. On the west end were three windows. Between 1894 and 1909, the building was lengthened by about 20', probably equipping the west end with engine-house doors (replaced by the present pair of garage doors about 1970), and installing two roof-dormers. Today, each longitudinal facade displays five window bays (now infilled), with stone lintels and sills. A denticular brick cornice extends around the building. Engaged brick corner-piers support the roof eaves on the southwest facade.

The building remained part of the PRR Car Shops until the mid-1960s, when Altoona Enterprises purchased it and nearby buildings from the railroad. Stanley Electric occupied the property from 1968 until its bankruptcy in 1976. The Stanley property was sold at auction to Lumax Industries, which leased the building and then sold it to the Home Nursing Agency, in 1986.

Sources:

Clark, Charles B., ed. Altoona Illustrated: A Complete Pen-Picture of the City of Altoona, Pennsylvania at the Close of the Year 1896 (Altoona: Board of Trade, 1896), p. 53.

Dredge, James. The Pennsylvania Railroad, its Organisation, Construction, and Management (London: office of Engineering, 1879), p. 94.

Pennsylvania Railroad Company, 24th Annual Report of the Board of Directors of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company (2/21/1871), p. 60.

Sanborn Map Company. Fire Insurance Maps of Altoona, Pennsylvania: 1888, 1894, 1909.